

## Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 190914

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, EG

SUBJECT: NIMBUS STREAM PRESS GUIDANCE

REF: STATE 189785

1. DOD SENDING TO ITS ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNED FOLLOWING  
PRESS GUIDANCE ON NIMBUS STREAM (REFTEL) FOR USE ON IF  
ASKED BASIS:

QUOTE. Q - IS IT TRUE THAT THE USG IS CLEARING A MINEFIELD  
FOR THE EGYPTIANS NEAR THE SUEZ CANAL?

A - YES, THE U.S. NAVY WILL ASSIST THE GOVERNMENT OF EGYPT  
IN CLEARING THE DAMIETTA MINEFIELD WHICH LIES JUST NORTH  
OF THE SUEZ CANAL AND PORT SAID. THE FIELD CONTAINS FIVE  
EGYPTIAN MINE LINES, LAID DURING THE 1967 MIDEAST WAR.  
THE REASON FOR SWEEPING THE DAMIETTA MINEFIELD IS THAT IT  
CONSTITUTES A HAZARD TO NAVIGATION AND LOCAL FISHING. THE  
REMOVAL OF THE MINEFIELD, LIKE THE CLEARANCE AND OPENING  
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OF THE SUEZ CANAL, WILL SERVE TO HELP RESTORE PEACEFUL  
CONDITIONS TO THE AREA.

SIX RH-53 HELICOPTERS FROM HELICOPTER MINE COUNTERMEASURES

SQUADRON 12 BASED IN NORFOLK, VA. ARE ON BOARD THE USS INCHON WHICH HAS GONE TO THE MEDITERRANEAN FOR A ROUTINE

DEPLOYMENT WITH THE SIXTH FLEET. THE PLANNED OPERATION IS EXPECTED TO TAKE 30 DAYS TO COMPLETE.

HM-12 IS THE SAME SQUADRON THAT ASSISTED THE EGYPTIANS IN 1974 DURING THE SWEEPING OF THE SUEZ CANAL. USS INCHON ALSO SERVED AS ONE OF THE FLAG SHIPS DURING THE SUEZ CANAL OPERATION.

THE SUEZ CANAL MINESWEEPING EFFORT ALSO USED AERIAL MINESWEEPING TECHNIQUES TO ENSURE THE ABSENCE OF LIVE MAGNETIC OR OTHER ORDNANCE IN THE WATERS OF THE CANAL.

Q1. WHEN WAS NIMBUS STAR (THE 1974 CLEARING OPERATION) COMPLETED?

A1. NIMBUS STAR WAS COMPLETED ON 30 MAY 1974. THEREAFTER, SALVAGING AND OTHER CLEARANCE WORK WAS DONE IN PREPARATION FOR THE SUEZ CANAL REOPENING ON JUNE 5, 1975.

Q2. HOW LARGE IS THE AREA IN THIS LATEST OPERATION?

A2. THIRTY-FIVE MILES ALONG THE NORTHERN COAST OF EGYPT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN.

Q3. WHY WASN'T THIS AREA SWEEPED DURING THE NIMBUS STAR OPERATION?

A3. THIS IS A SEPARATE AREA FROM THE SUEZ CANAL WHICH WAS THE SOLE AREA OF INTEREST IN NIMBUS STAR.

Q4. HAVE ANY OTHER COUNTRIES BEEN ASKED BY THE EGYPTIANS TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS OPERATION?

A4. NOT THAT WE KNOW OF.  
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Q5. HOW MANY PERSONNEL WILL BE INVOLVED IN THIS OPERATION?

A5. ABOUT 240 PERSONNEL WILL BE INVOLVED IN THE ACTUAL MINESWEEPING EXCLUDING SUPPORT PERSONNEL ONBOARD USS INCHON.

Q6. HOW MUCH WILL THE OPERATION COST?

A6. THE EXACT COST OF THE OPERATION, ALTHOUGH IT CANNOT BE ACCURATELY SPECIFIED UNTIL THE FULL SCOPE IS DETERMINED, IS ESTIMATED TO COST BETWEEN TWO AND THREE MILLION DOLLARS.

Q7. WHO WILL PAY?

A7. THE NAVY WILL BE REIMBURSED FOR THE COSTS BY AID OUT OF FY-76 SUPPORTING ASSISTANCE FUNDS, PROVIDED THE CONGRESS HAS NO OBJECTION. CONGRESS HAS BEEN NOTIFIED BY AID OF ITS INTENTION TO USE THESE FUNDS FOR THIS PURPOSE.

Q8. WHAT ASSISTANCE WILL BE PROVIDED BY THE GOE?

A8. THIS OPERATION IS IN SUPPORT OF THE GOE NAVY, AND THEIR MINESWEEPING THEIR MINESWEEPERS ARE EXPECTED TO PARTICIPATE. IN ADDITION, SHORE BASE SUPPORT AND SECURITY IS BEING PROVIDED THE USN BY THE GOE.

Q9. ARE THE MINES ACTIVE?

A9. IN ANY OPERATION OF THIS TYPE, THE ASSUMPTION HAS TO BE MADE THAT ALL MINES ARE ACTIVE, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF THE RECENT INCIDENT INVOLVING A MERCHANT SHIP THAT TRANSITED INTO THIS MINE AREA.

Q10. WHAT WILL BE THE FINAL DISPOSITION OF THE MINES?

A10. THE MINES WILL BE EITHER DESTROYED OR NEUTRALIZED.

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Q11. WILL ANY PERSONNEL/EQUIPMENT BE PUT ASHORE?

A11. YES. WHILE IT'S ANTICIPATED THAT WE WILL CONDUCT THE OPERATION FROM THE USS INCHON, COMMUNICATIONS, OTHER SUPPORT PERSONNEL AND SWEEPING EQUIPMENT WILL BE PLACED ASHORE TO FACILITATE THE OPERATION.

Q12. WILL THERE BE ANY MINESWEEPING SHIPS UTILIZED IN THIS OPERATION?

A12. A REQUIREMENT FOR USN MINESWEEPING SHIPS IS NOT ANTICIPATED. HOWEVER, THE EGYPTIAN NAVY HAS MINESWEEPERS WHICH WILL PARTICIPATE IN THIS OPERATION.

Q13. WHAT EQUIPMENT WILL BE USED?

A13. WE PLAN TO USE SWEEP GEAR INTEGRAL TO OUR AIRBORNE MINE COUNTERMEASURES UNITS. THE RH-53 HELOS WILL TOW THE MOORED MINESWEEPING WIRE SWEEPS, HYDROFOIL SLEDS FOR INFLUENCE MINES AND OTHER SIMPLE SWEEPS SUCH AS THE MAGNETIC ORANGE PIPE AS REQUIRED.

Q14. ARE THE MINES TO BE SWEEPED SOVIET MANUFACTURED?

A14. THE MINES WERE LAID BY THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS FURNISHED US THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MINES AND THEIR LOCATION.

Q15. WILL THE U.S. BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN POSSESSION OF THE MINES AFTER SWEEPING AND SUBSEQUENT NEUTRALIZATION?

A15. IT IS NOT NORMAL PROCEDURE TO TAKE POSSESSION OF MINES WHEN MINESWEEPING; THE OBJECT IS TO ACTIVATE THE MINE.

Q16. WHAT METHOD WILL BE USED TO DETERMINE THE AREA'S SAFETY?

A16. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, THIS IS A DECISION TO BE MADE BY THE GOE.

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Q17. U.S. PERSONNEL SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME TRAINING GOE PERSONNEL IN SALVAGE AND MINESWEEPING OPERATIONS. WHY CAN'T THE GOE HANDLE THIS RELATIVELY SMALLER OPERATION THEMSELVES?

A17. THE EGYPTIAN MINESWEEPERS ARE MADE OF STEEL AND ARE NOT CONSIDERED SAFE FOR SHALLOW WATER MINESWEEPING DUE TO THEIR MAGNETIC SIGNATURE. HELICOPTERS ARE.

Q18. ARE THERE ANY 6TH FLEET UNITS WHICH STILL REMAIN IN THE CANAL?

A18. NO. UNQUOTE.

2. IN ADDITION, DEPARTMENT HAS PREPARED FOLLOWING PRESS GUIDANCE, ALSO FOR USE ON IF ASKED ONLY BASIS, IN EVENT THIS ASPECT OF NIMBUS STREAM OPERATION SHOULD BE QUESTIONED:

QUOTE. Q - WE UNDERSTAND THE U.S. NAVY IS GOING TO SWEEP A MINE FIELD OFF OF PORT SAID. WHY ARE WE DOING THIS NOW AND DOES IT HAVE ANY RELATIONSHIP TO THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR ANOTHER DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT?

A - THERE IS NO RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS AND OUR AGREEMENT TO ASSIST THE EGYPTIAN NAVY IN SWEEPING THIS MINE FIELD. THE EGYPTIANS ASKED US TO SWEEP THE MINE FIELD LAST FALL, AND WE NOTIFIED THE CONGRESS OF OUR INTENTION TO DO SO, USING FY-75 SUPPORTING ASSISTANCE FUNDS FROM AID TO REIMBURSE THE NAVY FOR ITS COSTS. THE ONSET OF BAD WEATHER OVER THE WINTER PREVENTED US FROM SWEEPING THE MINE FIELD AT THAT TIME. THE

EGYPTIANS RECENTLY RENEWED THEIR REQUEST THAT WE SWEEP THE MINE FIELDS TO REMOVE A HAZARD TO NAVIGATION, LYING AS IT DOES NEAR THE ENTRANCE TO THE SUEZ CANAL. WE HAVE THEREFORE AGAIN NOTIFIED THE CONGRESS OF OUR INTENTION TO USE FY-76 SUPPORTING ASSISTANCE FUNDS TO REIMBURSE THE NAVY. OUR UNDERSTANDING IS THAT THE CLEARANCE WILL BEGIN ABOUT AUGUST 21 PROVIDED THE CONGRESS HAS NO OBJECTION. WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE ANY CONGRESSIONAL RELUCTANCE TO HAVE  
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OUR NAVY SWEEP THE MINE FIELD.

Q - I AM STILL INTERESTED IN THE TIMING OF THIS MINE SWEEPING, COMING JUST AT THE TIME WHEN THERE HAS BEEN SPECULATION THAT THE SECRETARY MIGHT BEGIN ANOTHER SHUTTLE. AREN'T THE TWO RELATED?

A - AS ISAID BEFORE, THE MINE SWEEPING IS NOT RELATED TO OUR NEGOTIATIONS. THE TIMING WAS AFFECTED BY THE NAVY'S NEED TO HAVE THE PROPER SUPPORTING SHIPS AND MINE SWEEPING HELICOPTERS ON STATION OFF PORT SAID AND BY THE REQUIREMENT THAT CONGRESS BE NOTIFIED 15 DAYS IN ADVANCE OF THE OPERATION. AUGUST 21 IS THE EARLIEST THAT THE NAVY CAN PHYSICALLY DO THE OPERATION AFTER THE EXPIRATION OF THE 15 DAY NOTIFICATION TO CONGRESS. UNQUOTE.

3. DOD HAS AGREED THAT ALL QUESTIONS NOT ANSWERED IN THEIR GUIDANCE WILL BE REFERRED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

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